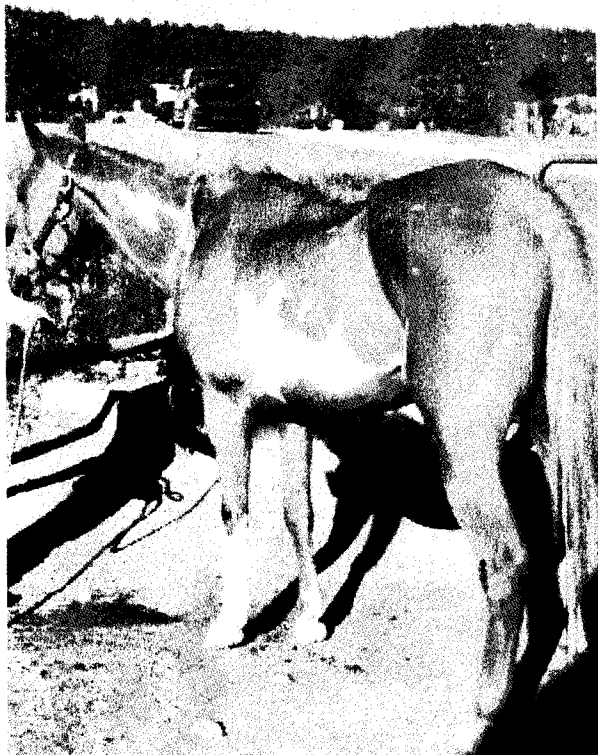


## Abused horses when they arrived at Montana Horse Sanctuary of Helena

EXHIBIT 7

DATE 2/6/2009

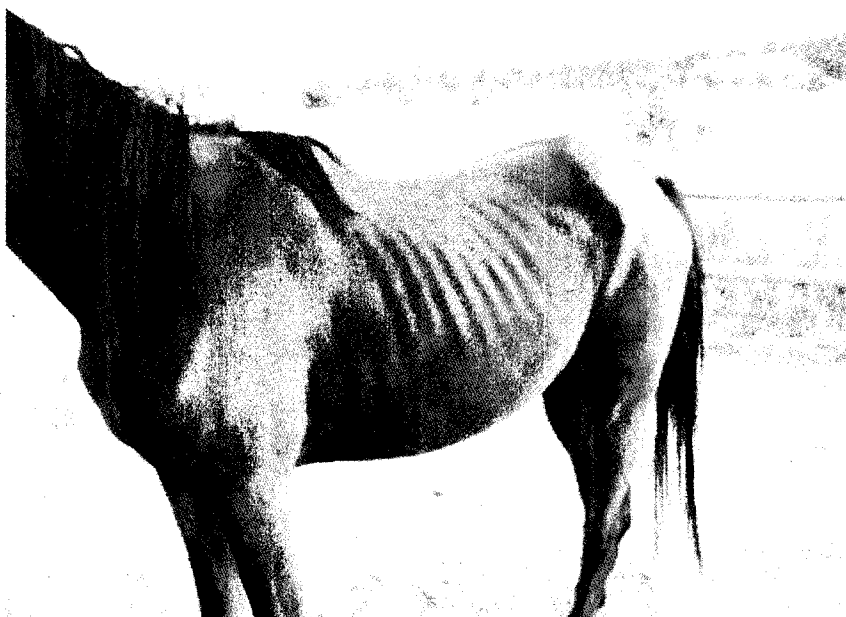
HB 349



Iris arrived at Montana Horse Sanctuary in late June 2008. Her owner had deprived her of food for the better part of six months.



Teddy arrived about 250 pounds underweight. He'd had no veterinary or hoof care for 19 months and was full of parasites.



Justin arrived at Montana Horse Sanctuary in September 2008 after being confiscated by the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office. When the Sheriff's office found him, he was standing near his dead pasturemate. Justin is part of an on-going court case. Today he is finally back to a normal weight and his health is good. The total cost of Justin's care, incurred the Sanctuary from Sept. 26, 2008 - Feb. 3, 2009 was \$2167.22.

Testimony in support of HB 349

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458-9722

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee and Representative Villa, thank you for this opportunity to testify on and support this very important bill.

My name is Jane Heath and I am the co-founder and executive director of Montana Horse Sanctuary here in Helena. Our organization rescues, rehabilitates and places in permanent adoptive homes abused, unwanted and in-crisis horses. The Sanctuary has been in operation nearly five years and I have been a professional equine therapist for 13 years. I was raised in Montana and have spent the majority of my life here.

I've passed around photos of some of horses when they arrived at the Sanctuary, each of whom was badly starved and abused. In each and every case, the person who inflicted this treatment was an adult, a person who chose to do this.

Animal ownership is a responsibility and a choice, not a right. Committing this offense once is horrible and committing it twice is inexcusable. The penalties should be more strict the second time and counseling should be required. In cases where the first offense is aggravated cruelty, the penalty should be greater than it currently is.

In the past year alone we have assisted law enforcement in Glacier, Lewis and Clark, Teton, Jefferson and Phillips Counties with abuse cases. We co-sponsored Equine Abuse Investigation Training for law enforcement personnel in April 2008 and will sponsor this training again every year. The upshot is that we have had the opportunity to communicate with law enforcement from all around Montana. The common theme is that horse abuse cases, like all animal abuse cases, are extremely expensive because of the cost of caring for and rehabilitating confiscated animals. As an example a horse we are caring for and rehabilitating for Lewis and Clark County arrived at the Sanctuary September 26 of last year. His current cost of care as of Wednesday was \$2167.62. The case isn't over yet so that cost will continue to rise until the case is resolved, hopefully by the end of February.

I urge this committee to support Representative Villa's legislation which will create a stronger deterrent to animal abuse and allow law enforcement to impose larger fines in these case and will better ensure the safety and welfare of animals in Montana. Thank you.